



STEVEN M. FULOP
MAYOR OF JERSEY CITY

CITY OF JERSEY CITY OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

CITY HALL | 280 GROVE STREET | JERSEY CITY, NJ 07302
P: 201 547 5500 | F: 201 547 5442



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Contact: Kimberly Scalzione

KScalzione@jcnj.org

*** **PRESS RELEASE** ***

Jersey City Sets National Precedent, Shifting Immigration Narrative

U.S. Department of Justice Recognizes & Accredits the Division of Immigrant Affairs for Provision of Legal Services and Data Driven COVID-related Relief Efforts for Immigrants

JERSEY CITY - **Mayor Steven M. Fulop** announced today, on National Citizenship Day, that Jersey City has become the first municipality in the nation accredited for offering free legal services to immigrants as part of the U.S. Department of Justice Recognition and Accreditation Program. Only two years after Mayor Fulop and the City Council created the Division of Immigrant Affairs, the newest addition to the Department of Health and Human Services has set a national precedent for helping immigrants navigate the corridors of the federal immigration system, an often lengthy and confusing process.

The honor, traditionally reserved for agencies and nonprofit groups, is being awarded as Jersey City is recognized for yet another prestigious national award recognizing Jersey City's rise as a national leader in integrating immigrants. The New American Economy (NAE) Research Award has named Jersey City as one of twelve communities to receive NAE research to further the Administration's efforts to address socioeconomic disparities within immigrant populations. The NAE research has been shared with community groups and nonprofit organizations to aid their work.

"As the most diverse city in the entire nation, we strive to cultivate meaningful relationships with our immigrant population who are traditionally underserved," said **Mayor Fulop**. "Our city notably places its Division of Immigrant Affairs within the Department of Health and Human Services, and sees the integration and overall success of immigrants in the context of public health."

With DOJ accreditation, HHS staff can fulfill unmet needs for legal assistance. They are authorized to answer complex questions, provide guidance, and liaise the bureaucratic immigration system that is becoming more and more restrictive to support individuals who choose Jersey City as home. Without this help, immigrants would have to pay private attorneys or take their chances with unlicensed notarios.

"Our free immigration legal services program will focus on naturalization, which is a strong social indicator of health," said **Stacey Flanagan, HHS Director**. "Naturalized citizens earn 8 to 11 percent more than non-naturalized immigrants. They have more stable jobs and fair better during crises."

Jersey City's approach also pairs the legal services offered with health screenings, food, immunizations, and benefits for an overall public health strategy that serves to support both foreign-born and native-born individuals.

The expanded legal service and research award follows two other national distinctions Jersey City recently received as the most diverse city in and third-best for integration in America.

"These are high profile achievements, and it speaks to the fact that we don't just call Jersey City a Sanctuary City, we act like one," concluded Mayor Fulop. "We will continue to expand our critical services to immigrant residents, regardless of status, which ultimately leads to long-term success and well-being for our city as a whole."

The back-to-back honors come at a time when Jersey City's immigrants will play an essential role in the 2020 Census. With 41% of residents born in a foreign country, increased restrictions and looming fee hikes for immigrants, Jersey City is at risk for a significant undercount in immigrant communities.

All media inquiries should be directed to Kimberly Scalcione at kscalcione@jcnj.org.